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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 7341
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 4144
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 8665
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY 0045
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0733
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1200
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY 2397
RUEHMK/AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY 3702
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY 9981
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 5409
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 4698
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 1149
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 3205
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3890
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 6665
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 6275
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 2280
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI PRIORITY 7106
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1470
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1470
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 9355
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 7657
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 7419
RUEHDIR/IRAN RPO DUBAI PRIORITY 0056

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 STATE 166405

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
LONDON FOR GAYLE
BERLIN FOR PAETZOLD
BAKU FOR HAUGEN
ISTANBUL FOR ODLUM
PARIS FOR JORDAN
KABUL FOR HOWARD
MOSCOW FOR KELLEHER/HOGAN
FBI WASHDC FOR LAIRD (WFO)
NSC FOR HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2017

TAGS: BA CASC IR IZ JO KDEM KISL KJUS KPRP KU LE MU PGOV
PHUM, PK, PREL, PTER, QA, SA, SY, TI, TU, TX, AF, KZ, AJ, AM, AE
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST - MISSING AMCIT ROBERT LEVINSON

REF: A. STATE 80300
 B. STATE 77328
 C. STATE 67683
 D. DUBAI 172
 E. DUBAI 181
 F. DUBAI 256

Classified By: DAS Gordon Gray, NEA/FO

11. (U) This is an action message. Please see paragraph 8.

BACKGROUND

12. (S) The United States has reason to believe Iranian security services may have targeted and detained private investigator and retired FBI Special Agent Bob Levinson on March 8, 2007, during a trip to Kish Island, Iran, presumably believing him to still be in USG employ.

¶3. (SBU) Levinson,s wife, son, and sister-in-law are scheduled to travel to Iran December 17-23 2007. The Embassy of Switzerland in Tehran, the U.S. Protecting Power in Iran in the absence of formal diplomatic relations, will assist the family during the visit.

¶4. (S) Press and other reporting indicate Levinson arrived on Kish Island to investigate for his client cigarette smuggling in the Gulf and perhaps regional networks of Russian organized crime. After checking into the Maryam Hotel, he may have met with U.S. citizen David Belfield, a.k.a. Dawud Salahuddin, a.k.a. Hassan Abdulrahman, wanted for murder in the United States in the slaying of Ali Akbar Tabatabai, a supporter of the late Shah and former Iranian diplomat, in 1980. Unconfirmed reports over the past several months suggest Levinson may now be in Evin Prison (Tehran) or elsewhere in Iran, under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Another source of unknown reliability claims Iranian proxies are holding Levinson in a third country.

¶5. (SBU) The United States has sent numerous formal inquiries to Iran since March 12, 2007 through the Government of Switzerland, seeking information on Levinson,s disappearance. In June, the EU delivered a demarche to the Iranian MFA on the cases of Levinson and the four Iranian-Americans who have since been released

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(Haleh Esfandiari of the Wilson Center, Parnaz Azima of Radio Farda, Ali Shakeri of the UC-Irvine Center for Citizens Peacebuilding, and Kian Tajbakhsh of the Open Society Institute). Officials from Japan, Turkey, India and various European states have also delivered points to the Iranians. Additionally, the governments of the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Canada and South Korea have committed to press the Iranians.

¶6. (SBU) Initially, the Iranians denied even being able to verify that Levinson had arrived in Iran, but later said they did not know what had happened to him after he had left his hotel on Kish on March 8. Tehran has refused to share any details of its investigation with the family or with the Swiss Embassy.

¶7. (S) Note: Some sources believe that, based on the Iranian government,s behavior, the regime may not/not be detaining Levinson. They argue that the authorities would have signaled to the USG that they were holding the former FBI agent and made demands. They note, too, that rumors that Tehran was holding an Amcit would eventually become widespread, even if the government was trying to keep this a secret. Alternate theories posit that: 1) the Iranians abducted Levinson on March 8 but he subsequently died in custody (he had been on medication for a number of health problems at the time of his disappearance); or 2) Levinson fell victim to Russian organized crime.

ACTION REQUEST/OBJECTIVES

¶8. (S) Posts should approach host governments to: 1) make informal and formal inquiries to the Iranians about Levinson; 2) urge Iranian cooperation during the visit of Levinson,s wife, scheduled for December 17-23, 2007; 3) push the authorities in Tehran to share copies of investigative reports, or at least disclose concrete details from those reports, with diplomats at the Swiss Embassy in Tehran; 4) pass along available information and intelligence on the Levinson case, particularly any "proof of life," to the U.S. government; 5) if appropriate, thank host governments for past assistance on the Levinson case.

¶9. (U) The information contained in below Non-Paper may be shared with host governments.

BEGIN TEXT OF LEVINSON NON-PAPER

United States Citizen Robert A. Levinson, a private investigator, has been missing in Iran since visiting Kish

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Island on March 8, 2007. According to immigration officials at Dubai International Airport, Mr. Levinson departed the United Arab Emirates at 10:45 on March 8, 2007, aboard Kish Air Flight Y97141. That same day he checked in to the Maryam Hotel on Kish Island. At the hotel, according to press reports, he met with American citizen David Belfield, a.k.a. Dawud Salahuddin, a.k.a. Hassan Abdulrahman, who is wanted for murder in the United States in the slaying of a supporter of the late Shah and former Iranian diplomat, Ali Akbar Tabatabai, in 1980. (Belfield fled to Iran after committing that crime.)

The United States has sent numerous formal inquiries to Iran since March 12 through the Government of Switzerland, our Protecting Power in Tehran in the absence of formal diplomatic relations, seeking information about Levinson's disappearance. The Iranians initially denied even being able to verify that Levinson had arrived in Iran, but later confirmed they had lost track of him after he left his Kish hotel on March 8. Tehran has refused to share any details of its investigation with the family or with the Swiss Embassy.

Levinson's wife, son, and sister-in-law are traveling to Iran December 17-23, 2007.

Mr. Levinson had been an official with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a U.S. Government law enforcement agency, until his retirement 10 years ago. The United States believes Mr. Levinson was visiting Iran to investigate Iranian cigarette smuggling for a client and/or research a book on Russian organized crime activities in the region. At the time of his disappearance, Mr. Levinson was not working for the United States Government.

Press reports indicate Mr. Levinson met Belfield at the Maryam Hotel on March 8. During the meeting, Iranian security personnel allegedly entered the room and detained both Levinson and Belfield. Belfield was subsequently released, but no one has seen Mr. Levinson since. Iranian authorities claim that Mr. Levinson left the hotel on March 8 in a taxi on his way to the airport, thus suggesting that he left the country.

At the time of his disappearance, Levinson was 6 ft 4 in (1.93 m) tall and weighed 250 lbs (115kg). Pictures of Bob Levinson, born March 10, 1948, may be found on the internet at helpboblevinson.space.live.com/photos. Mr. Levinson has serious health problems.

End of points.

POINTS OF CONTACT/REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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¶10. (U) Please report any comments that are provided by host governments as soon as possible. Points of contact are
Jenny Foo in CA (202 736-4997, foojj@state.sgov.gov) and
Tim Standaert in NEA/IR (202 647-2569/2520,

standaerttm@state.sgov.gov). Washington appreciates post's assistance.

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